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ABSTRACT

An analysis of differences in politeness between Japanese and English focuses on those that affect the relative imposition involved in a request. Introductory sections draw on previous research and theory, and discuss general linguistic and cultural principles underlying requests, politeness, and politeness strategies. Four rules for times when a speaker does not need to show politeness in requests are outlined, including: (1) the emergency rule; (2) the authority rule; (3) the insulting rule; and (4) the beneficiary rule. Rules for positive and negative politeness, which increase solidarity and increase imposition are explained, including (1) the solidarity rule, (2) the option rule, (3) the indirect rule, (4) the deference rule, and (5) the irony rule. The system of politeness in Japanese is briefly described, and compared and contrasted with English adherence to politeness rules. It is suggested that study of politeness in intercultural interactions analyze only actual, not contrived, interactions, and that analyses not be based on comparisons of the differences in Japanese and American intracultural interactions. (MSE)

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A Rules Perspective on Differences between Politeness Strategies Used in Requests by Americans and Japanese

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A Rules Perspective on Differences between Politeness Strategies Used in Requests by Americans and Japanese

Kenji Kitao

Introduction

The biggest problem Japanese have in communication with Americans is their lack of proficiency in English and the misunderstandings that can result. One area of communicative competence in which Japanese people have problems is politeness (Saito, 1985). One function in which politeness is important is in making requests (Tracy, Craig, Smith, & Spisak, 1984). The speaker (S) imposes on the hearer (H) in making a request. If S does not make the request appropriately, H may be embarrassed, and the relationship may be damaged.

In this paper, I will discuss requests, politeness and politeness strategies in general, rules for choosing among politeness strategies, politeness in Japanese, and some differences in politeness between Americans and Japanese. I will present some rules of politeness Americans and Japanese use in daily conversations and discuss those which might cause problems in communication between Americans and Japanese. Then I will discuss some questions for future research.

Requests

A request is made when S asks H to do something. S is imposing on H. H has to pay the cost of carrying out the request, and S usually gains the profit out of it. The size of the imposition is determined by the size of the request and is affected by whatever benefit H might receive and the power differences and familiarity of S and H. If the request size is larger, it involves a greater imposition on H. If H benefits, if the social distance is close (high familiarity), or if H's status (power) is lower than S's, the imposition is perceived as being smaller (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Kitao, 1988a; Kitao, 1988b; Scollon & Scollon, 1983). If the size of the imposition is perceived as being too large, H may reject the request, and S does not achieve the goal.

Three situational variables also affect S's imposition on H. These are 1) necessity of the request (how badly S needs to impose on H; greater necessity makes imposition smaller), 2) ease of carrying out the request (the easier a request is to carry out, the less the imposition), and 3) cultural differences (people with different cultural backgrounds perceive the same request as having a different imposition) (Kitao, 1988a). Therefore, the size of the request (absolute imposition) is mitigated by the relational distance between S and H and the situational variables, and it becomes the relative imposition that H experiences.

Politeness

Politeness is a communication strategy that people use to maintain and develop relationships (relation goal). Because requests are essen-

tially discourteous, achieving a request (action goal) may damage the relationship between the people concerned (Leech, 1983). Politeness therefore is an important Issue in making requests.

Politeness in requests is a communication strategy S uses to achieve both goals at the same time. S chooses the level of politeness based on the relative imposition involved in the request. It is important to use the right level of politeness. If S is not polite enough, H feels imposed on. If S is too polite, the utterance may sound sarcastic.

Brown and Levinson (1978) define politeness as maintaining H's face, that is, being unimposed on and approved of in certain respects. Face refers to wants, and Brown and Levinson (1978) argued that we have two types of wants: ego-preserving wants and public-self preserving wants, which refer to people's desire to be considered contributing members of the society. The former generates negative face, and the latter, positive face. Making a request more polite decreases the imposition involved and helps maintain the relationship between S and H. However that increases the chance of rejection, and S does not achieve the action goal. Thus, it is important to increase H's approval of S.

Strategies of Politeness

For achieving relationship and action goals in making requests, S determines the level of politeness based on the relative imposition on H and chooses different strategies. S may use plural strategies and change strategies in the process of the negotiation. Certain rules are used to make such choices. I will discuss the five levels of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978) and how Americans use rules

to choose levels and strategies of politeness.

Brown and Levinson (1978) present five superstrategies of politeness that show different levels of politeness.

1. A speaker may perform the request "baldly," making no attempt to acknowledge the hearer's face wants.
2. A speaker may perform the request while attending to the hearer's positive face wants, using what Brown and Levinson (1978: 106) label a positive politeness strategy.
3. A speaker might perform the request with negative politeness, acknowledging the hearer's negative face wants, the desire to be unimpeded and not imposed on.
4. A speaker may "go off-record" in performing the request. Here the speaker performs the act but in a vague manner (e. g., hinting) that could be interpreted by the hearer as some other act.
5. A speaker may not make the request and therefore not gain the goal.

The first strategy is not polite at all, and the last one is very polite but does not gain anything. Thus there are four different levels of politeness strategies that have the potential to gain the goal.

Brown and Levinson hold that speakers contemplating the performance of a request will generally choose higher-numbered (more polite) strategies in proportion to the seriousness of the request. However, because of the costs (e. g., effort, unclarity, and other threats to face) associated with the use of higher numbered strategies, speakers will not generally select strategies that are more polite than necessary (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

There are four rules for times when S does not need to show any

politeness in making a request (first level). They are emergency, authority, insulting, and beneficiary rules.

Emergency rule. In an emergency case, not showing politeness is acceptable.

(Case A)

A car is passing by the boss, and the subordinate tells the boss:

A: Watch out!
(After the car has passed by)
B: That was close! Thank you.
A: You're welcome, John.

H's power is higher, but this is an emergency and also for H's benefit; this rude statement is acceptable and there is no need to repair the politeness later.

Authority rule. No politeness is necessary for an authorized person to give an order to carry out a certain task.

(Case B)

Once when my friend did not stop at the stop sign, a police officer in a car saw him. The police officer used his mike:

A: Stop. Pull over to the side of the road.
(He got out of the car.)
A: Didn't you see the stop sign?
B: No, I didn't.
A: Do you have an ID?
. . . . . .

Insulting rule. Not using politeness can be used to insult H. This is usually used in close relationships.

(Case C)

Once I was standing in the doorway, and my wife was trying to get through the door with some heavy luggage. I did not notice it and did not move.

A: Move, dummy.
B: Sorry. I didn't know you were coming this way.
A: It's all right. You never pay attention to what I'm doing.
B: I'm really sorry.

Depending on the relationship, this strategy may cause problems in the relationship.

Beneficiary rule. S can make a request without politeness when H benefits from the request, particularly when S has to pay the cost.

(Case D)

Once when I was at an American home for a dinner, the hostess had slaved to make carrot cake which she was very proud of. When the dinner was almost over, she brought the cake to the table.

A: This is carrot cake, which I am good at making. I spent hours to make this. This is delicious. Who would like a piece?
(However, everyone was full, and no one volunteered to eat it.)
A: Kenji, you must eat it. This is good.
B: I'd like to have some, but I'm full.
A: Oh, you can have a small piece. Give me your plate.

This is an extreme example, but it often happens that people say, "Have another sandwich," or "Help yourself."

The emergency and authority rules involve high necessity, and

insulting and beneficiary rules involve high ease of carrying out the request.

Positive and Negative Politeness

Positive and negative politeness are often used in making requests. Positive politeness increases solidarity, and negative politeness decreases imposition. They interact in complicated ways according to the nature of the request and the status of S and H. Craig, Tracy, & Spisak (1986) discuss 15 positive politeness strategies and 10 negative politeness strategies, which are listed in the appendix.

Solidarlty rule. This is a form of positive politeness. People try to increase familiarity, narrow the power gap, and use more informal language. As uncertainty is reduced, familiarity increses, and through this process, partners in a relationship try to establish an equal relationship, and use more informal language. They also seek common ground between them and try to establish a more stable relationship. The more stable the relationship is, the less politeness required.

Option rule. This is a type of negative politeness. If H is given the option to refuse a request, the request is more polite.

(Case E)

When S is busy, the telephone rings. S requests H to answer the phone.

1. Answer the phone.
2. I want you to answer the phone.
3. Will you answer the phone?
4. Can you answer the phone?
5. Would you mind answering the phone?
6. Could you possibly answer the phone?

Leech (1983) argues that the statements with bigger numbers give H more of an option to refuse the request and therefore are more polite.

If the imposition involved in a request is large, the option to refuse may be given. However, if that option is given, the possibility of rejection is higher.

(Case F)

A: Could you come along and help me carry this stuff, if you don't mind?
B: Not at all. I don't mind.

(Case G)

A: Could you pick me up around 6:30? I have to bring a lot of stuff. Am I asking too much?
B: No, not at all. I'll pick you up at 6:30.

Indirect rule. This is the most polite level of strategy. Instead of making a request, S implies a request in other forms of utterances, such as hinting. The more indirect a request is, the more polite it is. However, there is always the chance that H will not realize that a request is being made (or can easily pretend that he/she doesn't understand), and S's action goal is not carried out.

(Case H)

Adult sister to brother, as she reaches into cupboard.
A: Oh dear, I wish I were taller!
B: Here, can I get something for you?
A: Yes, please, some of those green dishes up there. (Ervin-Tripp, 1976: 42)

Deference rule. This is the opposite of the solidarity rule. When H's power is far greater than S's and/or on formal occasions, deference is important. People tend to use last names with titles such as Dr., Professor, etc. They use more formal language, and put a clear distance between S and H. If they need to make a request, they use negative politeness with many options.

(Case I)

A: Mr. President, I understand that you are very busy, but I'd like to discuss a problem with you some time in the next two weeks. This is an important issue for the university, too.
B: O. K. Why don't you call my secretary and make an appointment?
A: Yes, sir.

Irony rule. When people use a much higher level of politeness than necessary, they are using irony.

(Case J)

Once I was in San Francisco running to get on a cable car, and some people on the car pulled me up. The car was very crowded, and I was standing on someone's foot. I was out of breath, and I did not notice it.

A: Could you kindly move a little bit?
B: I beg your pardon?
A: I'd appreciate it if you could move a little.
B: Well, it's very crowded, and I can't move.
A: (in loud voice) You're standing on my foot.
B: Oh, I'm terribly sorry.

(Case K)

In another situation, I was waiting for a train on the platform, and I happened to push the back of an American gentleman in front of me slightly, which Americans do not like. This often happens in Japan, and Japanese do not mind, but Americans do not like to be pushed.

A: Sir, I assume you're in a terrible hurry. Will you please take my place?
B: I'm sorry.

Linguistic Rules of Politeness

Linguistic forms indicate the level of politeness. I will discuss some basic rules found in previous research.

Fraser (1978) conducted studies ranking sentences in order of politeness. He found interrogatives politer than tag questions, declaratives and imperatives. The past tense is politer than the present, and positive sentences politer than negative sentences.

Carrell and Konneker (1981) found interrogatives most polite, declaratives next, and imperatives least polite. The past tense is politer than the present, and utterances with a modal are politer than those without one.

Using these linguistic rules of politeness can help determine the politeness level of a request.

Politeness in Japanese

Absolute social status and power relationships among people are clearer in Japan than in the US. Also, group consciousness—whether people are in the same group—is important in Japan. The Japanese

language supports this social system, and a special polite language, *keigo*, is used. It is important for Japanese people to know how to determine power differences and solidarity and acknowledge them through *keigo* (Horikawa & Hayashi, 1969).

The basic structure of *keigo* is similar to the system of politeness in English, though there are some differences. In this section, I will discuss how the two systems are different.

Differences in Politeness in English and Japanese

As I mentioned, the basic theory of politeness is similar in English and Japanese. In both English and Japanese, absolute imposition (the size of the request) is affected by relative imposition (degrees of familiarity, power, etc.). The major differences are that power is more important and clearer in Japanese, and familiarity is dealt with differently. When they speak to a superior, Japanese tend to acknowledge his/her superiority more and use more negative politeness than Americans. In English, including other people in one's own group by use of informal language is polite, but keeping other persons outside one's group is polite in Japan.

These differences create different rules of politeness, so they may cause problems between Americans and Japanese. I will examine differences in the application of rules presented in this paper.

Because power differences are clear and important in Japan, even in emergency cases, Japanese do not use the emergency rule. They would probably say, "*Abunai*! [Dangerous]" rather than using an imperative form, which Americans would be likely to use under the emergency rule. In contrast, the authority rule is much clearer in Japan, because

power differences are clearer. People with authority can impose on H. For example, teachers have much more authority in the classroom, so they can impose on students more than American teachers do. If they use polite requests to students, they are applying the irony rule. This authority rule is very strong in Japan, and when I use it, my American students perceive that I am too strict. Also, when I worked in a professional organization as a vice-president, I often told my American colleagues what to do using the authority rule, and they were offended

The irony rule is commonly used in Japan, but the insult rule is limited to people in very, very close relationships. When people want to accuse someone and still want to maintain a good relationship, they use the irony rule. The more polite the strategies are, the more accusation involved. The irony rule seems to be used in more serious situations than in the US.

The beneficiary rule does not work in Japan, so imperative forms or "must" and "have to" are very rude and we cannot use them in the same situations where Americans use them. Japanese put themselves in an inferior position and do not praise themselves. Even offering requires some politeness, because it may not benefit H and may be an imposition.

Americans tend to use positive politeness more than Japanese do, and Japanese use negative politeness to people outside of their groups. Japanese tend to avoid imposition as much as possible, which is important for maintaing good relationships.

Some characteristics of different uses of negative and positive politeness in Japan are that a Japanese often apologizes to keep good relationships, even when he/she is not wrong (negative politeness).

In the United States, an apology includes an admission of responsibility and this may cause a problem. If a Japanese wants to disagree or criticize, he/she does so indirectly (negative politeness). If an issue is minor, Japanese people usually agree even if they want to disagree (positive politeness) (Naotsuka et al. 1981). This is often not interpretable by Americans.

In responding to a request, Japanese tend to avoid a clear refusal. They try to give more options than Americans do.

(Case L)

> When I went to see a professor to discuss a misgraded exam, she was working in her office.
> A: Could I talk to you about the exam some time?
> B: Yeah, SOME TIME.
> A: When can I talk about it?
> B: The best time is my office hour.

I did not achieve my action goal, and she did not lose anything. In Japan, her attitude is rather rude, because judging from the context, it is obvious that I wanted to discuss it then. She needed to give some explanation for doing it later. She did not offer any other time before her office hour, four days later.

Indirect requests are very common in Japan, because a direct request is often regarded as too much of an imposition.

(Case M)

Recently, Mrs. B's daughter has started taking piano lessons. Her learning to play the piano is a good thing in itself, but the noise of her practicing late at night disturbs the neighborhood. No one in her neighborhood complains directly, however. Instead, a neighbor speaks

to Mrs. B in a roundabout way, as follows.

> A: Your daughter has started taking piano lessons, hasn't she? I envy you, because you can be proud of her talent. You must be looking forward to her future as a pianist. I'm really impressed by her enthusiasm—every day, she practices so hard, for hours and hours, until late at night.
>
> B: Oh, no, not at all. She is just a beginner. We don't know about her future yet. We hadn't realized that you could hear her playing. I'm sorry that you have been disturbed by the noise. (Naotsuka, et. al., 1981: 70)

The deference rule is important in Japan. Unless S and H are very close, deference is expected. If both people are using politeness strategies based on the deference they expect, there is not a problem. However, if one person violates the expectation of the other, the communication will not be very effective.

The solidarity rule is used in certain limited situations. When I attended the high school and elementary school reunions, people tended to use this rule, because we were very close and had been students in the same class. This is an exception, because Japanese do not self-disclose as much as Americans do (Barnlund, 1975). Thus, Japanese are offended if Americans use this rule and make self-disclosures early in the relationship.

There are some linguistic differences, too. In Japanese, modals and the past tense are not used in making requests. Negative interrogatives are often used in requests because they give options. In English, imperatives alone are rude, but imperatives with "please" are often polite enough. However, this is not true in Japanese. Using "please"

does not greatly increase the politeness of an imperative. Many Japanese believe that negative sentences are politer than positive sentences, and they have much difficulty using modals and past tense sentences. Linguistic rules of politeness in English are very difficult for Japanese to use appropriately, even if their command of the language is good.

There are few big differences between politeness strategies in English and in Japanese. However, they can be different in degrees of politeness and in the interpretation of politeness in different situations. These differences are among the cultural variables that affect the relative imposition involved in a request.

Implications for Future Research

It is important to investigate differences in the perceptions of power and familiarity that Americans and Japanese have, because these create different relative impositions and politeness strategies. In any study, it is important to make clear the situation, particularly the size of requests, the beneficiary, and familiarity and power relationships.

It is possible to manipulate subjects and test their politeness strategies in different situations based on a covering law perspective (Kitao, 1988a) or systems approach (Kitao, 1988b), but this may lack external validity (Craig, Tracy, & Spisak, 1986). The rules approach allows natural study of politeness strategies. Researchers can collect examples of actual use of politeness strategies and analyze them across situations. We need to understand the relationship and backgrounds of S and H very well and be sure of S's real intention, because it is sometimes very difficult to know them from transcripts or tapes.

As for studying problems of politeness strategies that arise in interactions between Americans and Japanese, it is better to study actual intercultural interactions rather than compare interactions among Americans and among Japanese and make suppositions about the problems of intercultural communication. The problem with the rules approach is that it is difficult to quantify results. However, it is sometimes important for researchers to deal with communication in natural settings rather than manipulating subjects. This approach provides more external validity, and the analysis of real data provides rules which we can later test.

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Appendix

Output Strategies for Positive and Negative Politeness

Positive Politeness

1 Notice, attend to Hearer (H): "You got a new haircut."

2 Exaggerate interest in, approval of, sympathy for H: "How terrible that it rained for your party!"

3 Intensify interest for H: Exaggerate facts or tell stories in present tense.

4 Use in-group identity markers: "Hey, honey, come here."

5 Seek agreement: Select safe topics on which agreement is expected.

6 Avoid disagreement: "Are you coming tonight?" "Yes, I'll probably stop over but don't count on it."

7 Presuppose, raise, assert common ground: Gossiping before getting down to business, or presupposing knowledge "The A-Team was wild last night."

8 Joke: "So you've got nothing to do this week." (said in response to long list of upcoming responsibilities.)

9 Assert, presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants: "I know you'd want to help me out with this if you could, so that's why I'm here."

10 Offer, promise: "Look, I promise to come by and visit you when I come to town."

11 Be optimistic: "You'll stay with the baby, won't you?"

12 Include both S and H in activity: "Let's put the milk away."

13 Give (or ask for) reasons: "Why don't we go out for pizza?"

14 Assume or assert reciprocity: "You get coffee today. I did it yesterday."

15 Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation).

Negative Politeness

1 Be conventionally indirect: "Can you please pass the salt?"

2 Question, hedge: "I wonder if you could help out?"

3 Be pessimistic: "I don't suppose there is any chance you could help me."

4 Minimize imposition: "Could I borrow your pencil for just a minute?"

5 Give deference: "I must be stupid. Could you help me fix this?"

6 Apologize: "I hate to ask you this, but. . . ."

7 Impersonalize S and H: "It's necessary that you do the following things."

8 State a general rule: "There's no smoking in this section."

9 Nominalize: "your poor performance on the exams" versus "you performed poorly."

10 Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H: "I'd be eternally grateful if you would. . . ."

1988年度英語英文学研究室研究会要旨

第1回　1988年7月12日（火）　於　綜照館会議室

報告者　勝　山　貴　之

Chronicler 対 Dramatist
Shakespeare の *Henry VIII* における歴史的視点

1613年2月，James I の娘 Elizabeth はドイツ・プロテスタント貴族連合の指導者 Frederick 王子と結婚している。この英国王室とドイツ・プロテスタント連合との結びつきは英国の宗教的立場を明確なものにした。多くの英国民にとって，この英国とドイツの友好関係は，ローマ・カトリック教国の脅威に対するプロテスタント側の同盟関係として心強いものであった。こうした時代風潮を背景に，Shakespeare は *Henry VIII* の創作を手がけているわけであるが，創作の過程で，彼がその種本としたのは Holinshed の *Chronicles* と Foxe の *Acts and Monuments* であったとされている。これらはいずれも，その著者のプロテスタント的立場から英国歴代の王の治政を綴った年代記であり，その中において Henry Ⅷ の存在は，法王の手先である Wolsey を倒して，ローマ・カトリックの迫害から英国を救う国民的英雄として描かれているのである。

このような劇の執筆・上演された時代背景，及びその種源の研究をとおして，Foakes, Felperine, Yates 等の批評家たちは，年代記の思想の反映を劇の中にも見いだそうとする。劇の中に描かれる Henry は，腐敗したローマ・カトリックの悪徳を体現する Wolsey の手から英国を救いだし，プロテスタント Cranmer に委ねる「神の代理（God's deputy）」とも呼ぶにふさわしい存在とされるのである。